

Agency: Commerce, Community and Economic Development**Grants to Unincorporated Communities (AS 37.05.317)****Grant Recipient: Hope****Project Title:****Project Type:** Remodel, Reconstruction and Upgrades

Hope - Social Hall Improvements

State Funding Requested: \$30,000**House District: 32 / P**

One-Time Need

Brief Project Description:

This grant request for \$30,000 would allow Hope to purchase the land under the Hope Social Hall and make needed repairs to this historic building.

Funding Plan:**Total Cost of Project: \$30,000***There is no other funding needed***Detailed Project Description and Justification:**

The Hope Social Hall was built by community volunteers in 1902 - 1903 and has served community functions ever since. The building sits on its original site. It is the most important building in town, used for public meetings and social functions. The Social Hall has been referred to as "Hope's living room."

The Hope Social Hall is a contributing feature in the Hope Historic District. It is a rectangular 1.5-story log structure, with a log foundation. The gable roof is covered with aluminum, and has an east-west orientation. The building measures 37'6" X 25'8". The logs are square notched. The building has one door (with a nine-light window) and eight double-hung, twelve-light windows. The wood frame porch has a shed roof that is covered with felt paper. The porch measures 12' wide.

Recently, the community of Hope was shocked to learn that they did not own the land under the building, the BLM does, and that it will be offered for sale in the near future. A recent land survey indicates that the building's eaves extend over the adjoining property and the log foundation suffers some log rot. The community wishes to purchase the land, move the building one foot, replace lower rotten logs, and set it on a new foundation. Some window panes need replacing, others need to be puttied. The trim needs another coat of white paint. The total cost of purchasing the land and doing the needed restorations could cost well over \$30,000.

Project Timeline:

Expenditures will occur as soon as the land is available for purchase.

Entity Responsible for the Ongoing Operation and Maintenance of this Project:

Hope, Inc.

Grant Recipient Contact Information:

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Has this project been through a public review process at the local level and is it a community priority? ☒ Yes ☐ No



Hope and Sunrise Historical Society

PO Box 88

Hope, AK 99605

The people of Hope support a grant request of \$30,000 for the purchase of land and restoration of the Hope Social Hall. The state grant will be combined with other funds to make needed improvements to this important historic building, which is still actively used by the community.

The Hope Social Hall, referred to as “Hope’s living room” and “the heart of Hope,” is the most important structure in the community. In 1896, Hope had South-central Alaska’s first gold rush. In 1902-03, Hope volunteers built the log social hall on Main Street. For over 100 years, the building has served weekly community functions: local government meetings, historical society meetings, potlucks, dances, weddings, and Hope’s 1988 centennial celebration. In 1972, the Hope Historic District was placed on the National Historic Register, with the Social Hall as a contributing feature. It would be tragic if the community of Hope lost its Social Hall!

A few years ago, the community was shocked to learn that the property under the Hope Social Hall (Hope Block 10, Lot 5) was held by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management. In 2005, Hope, Inc. obtained a State of Alaska grant to purchase the land. On April 21, 2010, the property was transferred to the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, as a University of Alaska grant, patent #50-2010-0241. Hope, Inc.’s President Shawn Butler expects to have the land purchase completed this year. The Social Hall is in great need of restoration, and this 2010 grant money will fund those repairs.

This grant will also assist Hope, Inc. in obtaining matching funds from the Kenai Mountains – Turnagain Arm Heritage Corridor Communities Association to complete the project. Your support is needed to preserve this very significant historic and irreplaceable Alaska landmark.

Thank you.

Diane Olthuis

President, Hope and Sunrise Historical Society

Hope Social Hall

Built in Hope, Alaska by Community Volunteers in 1902-03



1917 Hope Get Together



1988 Hope Centennial Celebration



Hope's Main Street, ca. 1955

The Hope Social Hall is to the Far Right

The Hall is a Contributing Feature of the Hope Historic District



THE HOPE SOCIAL HALL, 1920S

HOPE'S LIVING ROOM FOR 100 YEARS

\$3

THE HOPE SOCIAL HALL



**THE HEART OF HOPE, ALASKA
SINCE 1902**

BY DIANE OLTHUIS

**DEDICATED TO
EMMA SNEVE CLARK
1904-2000
EMMA UNDERSTOOD
THAT A TRUE COMMUNITY
NEEDS A SOCIAL CENTER.**

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Cover photo: Hope Social Hall, 1999



**CARL AND EMMA CLARK'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY
HOPE SOCIAL HALL, 1984**

THE HOPE SOCIAL HALL: THE HEART OF HOPE, ALASKA

Hope is the best preserved gold rush community in Southcentral Alaska. Several buildings date to the start of the Turnagain Arm Gold Rush, 1896. The log Hope Social Hall is not nearly as old, but it has been the heart of the community of Hope since 1902. It is the community living room.

American prospector Alexander King discovered gold on Turnagain Arm in 1888 or 1889. A few prospectors staked claims along Resurrection Creek. The Alaska Commercial Company built a small log trading post. The rush started in earnest in 1896. Three thousand gold seekers flocked to Cook Inlet that summer. Hope City, at the mouth of Resurrection Creek, became the commercial center. Most miners left Alaska in the fall. A few built small cabins and stayed the winter. During the winter of 1899-1900 there were seventy residents in Hope City, including one white woman -- Lavinia Mathison.

Winter nights were long and most cabins were tiny. The community felt that it needed a gathering place. So, over the winter of 1902-03, Ed Crawford, Al Davis, and the Mathison family built the Hope Social Hall. The hall has also been referred to as the Hope Community Hall, Hope Town Hall, and Mathison Hall. The community collected at the hall every Saturday night for a shared dinner (bachelors did not have to bring food) and entertainment (music, dancing, plays, or movies). The social hall was where people gathered for holiday celebrations, weddings, and miners' meetings.

CHRISTMAS 1903

The residents of Hope were very exuberant on Christmas Eve, 1903. Someone stole dynamite (either one or six cases depending on which story you believe) from James Buzard's Bear Creek Mining Company. The dynamite was exploded on the tidal flats near town. The defenders of the prank said that only a bridge and a window were damaged. A detractor claimed that the "gang of vandals... blew a hole in the ground, buried a cabin, broke windows and blew down some of the fence in the vicinity." The noise was particularly distressing to Mr. and Mrs. A. L. Howard, who lived nearby. A Christmas dance was held at the new social hall the next day, Christmas.

This letter appeared in the February 18, 1904 Valdez newspaper, *The Alaska Prospector*:

...an old and respected citizen, Mr. A. L. Howard, who on going home from the ball on Christmas night, dropped dead from heart failure. Mr. Howard... has been troubled with his heart for some time... and it was thought that the sudden shock and fright was the primary cause of his death...

[signed] The Tattler

Widow Howard had previously been a teacher. Now needing money to return home, she asked the Hope parents to pay her to teach their children. They came up with the money and she opened Hope's first school that winter. The student body may have numbered eight. Mrs. Howard left Hope after the school term.

CHRISTMAS 1913

Emma Wood Atkinson spent the winter of 1913-14 in Hope. Years later she fictionalized her experience in a book manuscript, *The Young Mrs. Sourdough*. She was delighted that "whenever a newcomer arrived in Hope, a big dance party was held in Mathison Hall."

Atkinson wrote:

Christmas that year was a memorable occasion, and so unlike the preceding year for us. Mrs. Mathison was hostess for the dinner given for everyone in town. She sent two of her men 75 miles by dog team to Seward to buy all the food for the dinner which included turkey, ham and all the holiday trappings for a big feast. A long table was set up in the large dance hall by placing boards across the sawhorses. A number of sheets served as the tablecloth and all of the women helped cook the pies, cakes, and other goodies. Men were charged with making coffee, and Bonnie and I, as the youngest two women, were appointed to serve.

It was like a huge family picnic, with the older folks and children being served first. There were no Christmas tree lights, tinsel, gifts or any of the traditional holiday trimmings, but the glow of happy faces shone brightly as we heartily shared our feast.

As soon as the table was removed, the dancing began, halted only briefly to listen to 3 1/2-year-old Sylvia [Wood] recite her new poem.

...The three-piece orchestra played on and on into the wee small hours of the morning as the fun-loving group danced. It was a truly Merry Christmas from beginning to end.

HOPE'S CHILDREN

Carl Clark, his parents and siblings arrived in Hope in 1913 to help his Aunt Lavinia Mathison's family. Carl was interviewed by the editor of *We Alaskans: The Anchorage Daily News Magazine* for this October 13, 1985 article:

Clark remembers falling asleep behind the wood stove in Hope's social hall when the miners held their Saturday night dances. And listening to the miners' meetings when someone had run afoul of Hope's code of behavior. Men voted with their feet in those days, Clark says. All those in favor of driving a man out of town were asked to walk to one side of the hall; all those in favor of letting him stay walked to the other. You knew where people stood.

pp. G-3

Emma Atkinson wrote in *The Young Mrs. Sourdough*:

The girls were then snugly wrapped in their nighties and tucked comfortably inside the sled. Upon arriving at the dance hall, we would push the sled inside near the heavy oil drum which served as the heater in the hall. We simply lifted the babies, bedding and all, right into the already built bunks where they could watch the dancers until they fell asleep. When the dance was over we simply reversed the procedure until they were once again safely back home. [1914]

pp. 102

The first, 1915, Hope Territorial School was held in a former brewery building on Main Street. That building burned down during the spring of 1937. Classes were completed in the Hope Social Hall. A new school building was opened in 1938.

MUSIC AND MOVIES

Mary Barry wrote about Hope's first social hall musicians in her monumental book, *A History of Mining on the Kenai Peninsula, Alaska*:

During his early days at Hope, Bob [Mathison] learned to play the violin. George Slayback, a college man whose athletic feat was competitive walking, also could make violins. He made about fifty during his stay at Hope. Bob traded a moose to him for a violin. The violin came apart in later years, as Slayback did not have the proper glue, but it served its purpose in the early days.

Bob's teacher was Frank Styles. Styles mined in the summer and played violin in the winter. The men would gather at his house for musical sessions. He played several instruments and also taught singing.

pp. 9

Miner "Doc" Iver Nearhouse purchased the Hope store in 1942 (now the SeaView Cafe). Everyone in the community loved him for his generosity and enthusiasm for Hope. Doc oversaw the Hope Social Hall until his death in 1962. There was a potluck and dance to amateur music at the social hall every Saturday night. Twice a month, Doc rented a movie and showed it in the hall on his own projector. The power cord extended across the street to Doc's generator shed.

In recent decades, Hope residents prefer professional dance bands, so dances are less frequent. When dances are held, they are supported by admission fees or paid for by one of Hope's nonprofit organizations.



**ROBERT "BOB" E. MATHISON, ABOUT 1918.
BOB ARRIVED IN HOPE IN 1899, WHEN HE WAS 8.
FOR DECADES HE PLAYED A FIDDLE
AT HOPE SOCIAL HALL DANCES.**

6.



**NUMEROUS DANCES AND MANY WEDDINGS
HAVE BEEN HELD IN THE HOPE SOCIAL HALL.
IN 1984, DANCERS CELEBRATED
THE GANTENBEIN-OLTHUIS WEDDING.**

7.

FOURTH OF JULY, 1938

Dennie McCart wrote about the 1938 celebration in his book, *The Hope Truckline and 75 Miles of Women*:

July 4th about 7 AM I noticed a few men coming in and out of the store. Business was getting pretty good over there. About 10 AM the kids had dropped in and said there was to be a dance starting about three o'clock in the afternoon. The women would bring food and everybody was to come...

All the ladies and girls were in their Sunday best dresses, bringing in lots of dishes and pots of food which we placed on the bale over in the corner of the hall, by a big 110 gallon barrel stove, But the stove was not fired up at that time of the year.

On a platform about two feet high at the back of the hall were some men with bass violin, guitar, banjo and violin. I learned later they were the Clark boys; Delmar Sobel and Hub (the oldest Clark, whom the boys called "Pap").

When they started playing it was just the kind of music that would almost make a dead man jump up and start dancing. Everybody danced, kids and all. Boy! what a wonderful time. We stopped to eat for about an hour and did I ever store away the food. Then back to dancing until about 9 PM. Then the men left to go back to the mines and jobs they were working on. I was ready for bed myself, and was so pleased to be part of such a nice community. Best of all I had danced and got acquainted with some very nice attractive girls.

pp. 7-8

THE CLARKS' 50TH ANNIVERSARY PARTY

Favorite Hope residents, Carl and Emma Clark, were given a surprise fiftieth anniversary party at the Hope Social Hall in 1984. *We Alaskans* recorded the events:

Meanwhile, friends and family were pouring into the old Social Hall, their arms laden with good things to eat, and cards and presents. One long narrow table running the length of the room sagged with potluck offerings: big black pots of baked beans, trays of fried chicken, green chili casseroles, Jell-O molds, buckets of fresh fruit salad, coleslaw, tarts, pudding, rolls, cold cuts, potato salad, brownies, chips, cobbler, coffee and punch.

The hall, so old that daylight flooded through gaps in the wallboards, was brightened by yellow and white paper streamers, white paper wedding bells and bright flower pots in each window.

On a table up front was a giant wedding cake and neatly arranged soft paper napkins with gold lettering -- "Carl and Emma, Fiftieth Anniversary, June 25, 1934." Presents and cards were stacked on a table next to it.

...Carl and Emma took a long time getting into the hall because they had to stop and chat with everyone they knew out front, and they knew everyone.

pp. O-7

HOPE'S CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

Prospector Alexander King rowed his boat up Turnagain Arm in 1888 and returned to the Kenai trading post in 1889 with four pokes of gold. Hope residents like to believe that King found some flakes in Resurrection Creek that first summer. So, the community celebrated it's centennial in 1988.

A social activity that required committees and extensive planning was not the Hope way. (The last such event had been the 1941 Apple Festival.) However, committees were formed and the Discovery of Gold Centennial Celebration was held on July 15, 16, and 17, 1988. Everyone was asked to "get in the spirit, come in 1888 attire."

The activities varied from the scholarly to the silly. There were traditional social hall activities, plus a few fund raising activities for Hope's nonprofit organizations. A historian spoke on the significance of the Turnagain Arm Gold Rush. Many Alaskan movies were shown. A Robert Service Reading Contest was a popular event. Carl Clark was the Parade Grand Marshall. What the parade lacked in historic theme it made up for in heart-felt enthusiasm. There was a treasure hunt, moose nugget throwing contest, sack race, and watermelon eating contest for the children. Plus, a "Miners Triathlon", greased pole race, and 1888 swimsuit contest for the adults. Everyone enjoyed the potluck, dessert auction, and square dance. All could buy a ticket for the gold nugget raffle or compete in the 5K Wagon Trail Run.

The Wagon Trail Run continues every year on the third weekend in July. Hope's five nonprofit organizations have used the weekend as a multi-faceted fund raising event.

THE SOCIAL HALL: FEET & INCHES

The Hope Social Hall is a rectangular 1.5-story log structure. The foundation is log. The gable roof is covered with aluminum, and has an east-west orientation. The social hall measures 37'6" by 25'8". The logs are square notched. The building has one door (with a nine-light window) and eight double-hung, twelve-light windows. The storage loft is accessible through a small outside east door, and is not currently being used. The west wood frame porch has a shed roof that is covered with felt paper. The porch measures 12'" wide.

There are four outhouses in the yard, all with south facing doors. There is a white horizontal board fence on the south and east sides of the lot.

The building sits on Hope's Main Street (Block 10, Lot 5). Main, First, and Second Streets comprise Hope Historic District recognized by the Department of the Interior's Register of Historic Places in 1972. The nomination was sought by the Hope and Sunrise Historical Society, established in 1970. It is an honor that the Hope Social Hall and surrounding buildings well deserve. Most buildings in the historic district are privately owned. Please respect private property while walking around. This is truly a special place!



LEARN MORE ABOUT HOPE

Atkinson, Emma A.. *The Young Mrs. Sourdough*.
Unpublished manuscript.

Barry, Mary J.. *A History of Mining on the Kenai Peninsula, Alaska*. Anchorage: MJP Barry, 1997.

Bryson, George. "Hope's Promise: The Rush is Over, but Hope holds Golden Dreams." *We Alaskans: The Anchorage Daily News Magazine*, 10/13/85.

McCart, Dennie. *The Hope Truckline and 75 Miles of Women: Stories of Alaska*. Portland: Binford & Mort, 1983.

McCoy, Kathleen. "Emma and Carl." *We Alaskans: The Anchorage Daily News Magazine*, 7/15/84.

Olthuis, Diane. *Goldpan, Trapline & Camera: The Harry A. Johnson Album*. Hope: Timbers, Tails & Yarns, 1997.

Olthuis, Diane. *Historic Building Survey Report: Hope, Alaska*. Hope and Sunrise Historical Society, 1998.

Olthuis, Diane. *Patterns of Hope: The Practical Architectural Wisdom of Hope, Alaska*. Hope and Sunrise Historical Society, 2000.

Books can be ordered from:

Hope and Sunrise Historical Society
P.O. Box 88, Hope, AK 99605